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**ACCUSED BELIZEAN DRUG TRAFFICKER TIED TO COLOMBIAN TERRORIST
GROUP EXTRADITED ON COCAINE CHARGES AND THREATS TO U.S. AGENTS**

DAVID N. KELLEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today that ROBERT HERTULAR, an alleged multi-ton cocaine trafficker with ties to a Colombian terrorist group, has been extradited to the United States from Belize on charges of narcotics conspiracy and making threats against the lives of federal agents.

HERTULAR was indicted earlier this year by a federal grand jury in Manhattan on two narcotics importation counts, one count of impeding federal agents through threats, and one count of obstruction of justice. The Indictment, and papers filed by the United States in Belize seeking HERTULAR's extradition, charge that HERTULAR coordinated a 1.1-ton shipment of Colombian cocaine destined for the United States, which was seized by Belize Police anti-drug agents on May 9, 2001. The extradition papers state that after the seizure, HERTULAR told Belize Police agents that he had arranged the transportation of the cocaine shipment from Colombia to Belize through Carlos Castano, whom

HERTULAR characterized as a personal friend. (Before his disappearance and presumed murder earlier this year, Castano was the head of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia ("AUC"), a right-wing paramilitary group designated by the State Department as a foreign terrorist organization; two of the successors to the leadership of the AUC, Diego Fernando Murillo-Bejarano and Vicente Castano, have been indicted by a federal grand jury in Manhattan on cocaine importation charges). HERTULAR also told Belizean agents that he had conducted four other cocaine shipments to the U.S. in 2001, each consisting of approximately 1.2 tons.

After the cocaine seizure, HERTULAR was arrested by the Belize Police and released on bail by a Belizean court. Agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA") stationed in Belize continued their investigation of HERTULAR. According to U.S. extradition papers, on Christmas Day 2003, HERTULAR sought a meeting with the Special Agent in charge of the DEA's Belize Country Office. When the supervisor and one of his Agents met with HERTULAR, HERTULAR informed the Agents that if the DEA did not terminate its investigation, HERTULAR would have the Agents murdered. The extradition papers further indicate that earlier in 2003, HERTULAR had offered a hand grenade and other weapons to another individual for use against agents of the DEA. The other individual turned out to be a DEA informant, and reported HERTULAR's intentions to the U.S. Government.

As indicated, HERTULAR was indicted by a federal grand jury shortly after these threats, in January 2004. On January 29, 2004, HERTULAR was arrested in Belize for extradition purposes, pursuant to a request by the U.S. State Department to the Belize Foreign Ministry. After protracted litigation in the Belizean courts, on Wednesday, July 22, 2004, a Belizean judge granted the United States' request that HERTULAR be extradited to face the charges in the Indictment. The extradition process was completed Friday, July 24, when HERTULAR was flown to Westchester County Airport in White Plains, New York aboard a DEA jet.

HERTULAR is scheduled to be presented before United States Magistrate Judge THEODORE H. KATZ this afternoon. If convicted on all of the charges in the Indictment, HERTULAR faces a maximum sentence of life imprisonment, and a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years' imprisonment.

Mr. KELLEY praised the outstanding investigative efforts of the DEA's New York Drug Enforcement Task Force, its Belize Country Office, and its Mexico-Central America Division, as well as the Belize Police Department and the Belize Department of Public Prosecutions.

Assistant United States Attorneys RICHARD SULLIVAN and ANIRUDH BANSAL are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Indictment are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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